

rights of the community and the obligations of charity. Its practical application was an idealized version of the feudal order, which was vanishing before the advance of more business-like and impersonal forms - of land-ownership, and which, once an engine of exploitation, was now hailed as a bulwark to protect the weak against the downward thrust of competition. Society is a hierarchy of rights and duties. Law exists to enforce the second, as much as to protect the first. Property is not a mere aggregate of economic privileges, but a responsible office. Its *raison d'etre* is not only income, but service. It is to secure its owner such means, and no more than such means, as may enable him to perform those duties, whether labour on the land, or labour in government, which are involved in the particular status which he holds in the system. He who seeks more robs his superiors, or his dependants, or both. He who exploits his property with a single eye to its economic possibilities at once perverts its very essence and destroys his own moral title, for he has "every man's living and does no man's duty."^{1*}

The owner is a trustee, whose rights are derived from the function which he performs and should lapse if he repudiates it. They are limited by his duty to the State; they are limited no less by the rights of his

tenants against him. Just as the peasant
may not
cultivate his land in the way which he may
think most
profitable to himself, but is bound by the
law of the
village to grow the crops which the village
needs and to
throw his strips open after harvest to his
neighbours'
beasts, so the lord is required both by
custom and by
statute to forego the anti-social profits to
be won by
methods of agriculture which injure his
neighbours
and weaken the State. He may not raise
his rent or
demand increased fines, for the function of
the peasant,
though different, is not less essential than
his own. He
is, in short, not a *rentier*, but an officer,
and it is for
the Church to rebuke him when he
sacrifices the duties